DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 164 061 JC 790 070

TITLE	Institutional Research, Fiscal Year 1977: Perceptions of Mastery Grading. Research Monograph VIII.
INSTITUTION	South Oklahoma City Junior Coll., Okla.
PUB DATE	77
NOTE	53p.
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.83 HC-$3.50 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Academic Records; Administrator Attitudes; *Attitudes; Community Colleges; Counselor Attitudes; Employer Attitudes; Grades (Scholastic); *Grading; Higher Education; Institutional Research; *Junior Colleges; *Mastery Learning; School Funds; Secondary Education; Student Attitudes; Student Evaluation; Student Financial Aid; *Surveys; Teacher Attitudes; Transfer Policy; Transfer Students

ABSTRACT

The grading policy at South Oklahoma City Junior College (SOCJC) allows a student to master a course by doing a specified amount of work to a pre-determined standard (80% mastery). When this is accomplished, the student receives an "M" indicating mastery; otherwise, nothing appears on the official record. No A, B, C, grades are awarded. This document compiles six studies dealing with the perceptions of the "M" grade by different SOCJC constituencies. The first survey examined employers of the college's students. Employers preferred a traditional transcript though about two-thirds would accept a list of student competencies. Next studied were other institutions of higher education, which also preferred transcripts allowing student comparisons; however, no SOCJC students had been denied entrance to these transfer schools. A third study of financial aid offices examined effects on both student aid at transfer institutions as well as on SOCJC's ability to obtain student aid funds. It appeared students may have had trouble getting scholarships, though the college itself had no problem getting funds. A need was seen for added information and explanation about the system in the next survey of high school counselors. The fifth survey concerned student attitudes. About 40-45% saw the "M" as an advantage, while 23-30% saw it as a disadvantage. The final report studied faculty and staff perceptions. The majority felt the system was an advantage to students but the problems in transferring and the fact that there is no reward for excellence were disadvantages. (MB)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED164061

INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH, FISCAL YEAR 1977:

PERCEPTIONS OF MASTERY GRADING

Research Monograph VIII

South Oklahoma City Junior College

Office of Planning and Development

1977

JC 790 670

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Annmarie Shirazi

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC) AND USERS OF THE ERIC SYSTEM."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

INTRODUCTION

During fiscal year 1977, a number of research studies were carried out, and a series of twelve research monographs were written at intervals throughout the year to summarize the major institutional research projects undertaken. Within this document are the six individual monographs all dealing with the same topic, the "M" letter grade.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

VIII Mastery Grading

A. The "M" and Employers 52

B. The "M" and College Admissions Officers 56

C. The "M" and Financial Aids 60

D. The "M" and High School Counselors 68

E. The "M" and Our Students 80

F. The "M" and the Faculty and Staff 90

THE "M" AND EMPLOYERS

RESEARCH MONOGRAPH VIII-A

Office of Planning and Development
March, 1977

This monograph is one of a series of six, all dealing with the expressed perceptions of the "M" as a letter grade by a number of different groups. For this particular paper, the group being queried was made up of past, present, and future employers of our students. The questionnaire, which can be found in Table I, was sent to 81 area businesses whose personnel offices belonged to the Oklahoma City Personnel Association.

Of the 81 questionnaires mailed, 51 were returned which gives a 62.96% response rate for the questionnaire. The percent indicating each alternative can be found in Table II.

Basically, the information indicated that employers do use transcripts in the hiring process, but most of those queried had never seen our transcript. When interviewing an applicant with our type of transcript, most employers would look more closely at the applicant, but none said they would not consider someone with our type of transcript. However, through written comments, they indicated they would feel much better about hiring a person with the traditional A,B,C transcript. Approximately two-thirds of the employers indicated that they compensated employees for taking job-related courses, and fifty percent of those said they would not compensate students who did not receive traditional grades. Written comments revealed they were concerned about how they could fit the "M" into their particular system of compensation for satisfactory completion of work.

In general, the employers responding indicated that they would rather have a traditional transcript since they feel they understand it and have the ability to make decisions from it. Yet about two-thirds indicated they would use a list of student competencies if they were provided one.

TABLE I

QUESTIONNAIRE OF EMPLOYEES

I. Do you look at transcripts during your hiring process?

YES_____ NO_____

II. Have you ever seen one of South Oklahoma City Junior College's transcripts?

YES_____ NO_____

III. What would be your feeling about hiring a person if you saw a transcript with all "M's" rather than "ABC's" and no grade point average?

_____It would not affect my decision to hire someone.

_____I would look at the individual more closely during a personal interview than I would others with traditional transcripts.

_____I would never consider the individual for a position.

_____Other, please specify:_____

_____

IV. Do you compensate employees for taking job-related courses?

YES_____ NO_____

If yes, would the lack of a traditional "ABC, etc." keep you from compensating an employee studying at South Oklahoma City Junior College?

YES_____ NO_____

Comment:_____

_____

V. Would you use in the hiring process a student evaluation which would list the student's competencies at the end of his program?

YES_____ NO_____

Other suggestions on information needed:_____

_____

_____

TABLE II

RESPONSES TO EMPLOYER QUESTIONNAIRE

QUESTION	Percent Responding
1. Do you look at transcripts during your hiring process?	
a) Yes	84.4%
b) No	15.7%
2. Have you seen one of SOCJC's transcripts?	
a) Yes	3.9%
b) No	96.1%
3. What would be your feeling about hiring a person with a transcript not having "A,B,C's" or a "GPA?"	
a) It would not affect my decision to hire someone.	23.5%
b) I would look at the individual more closely during the personal interview than those with traditional transcripts.	54.9%
c) I would never consider an individual for a position.	0%
d) Other	21.6%
4. Do you compensate employees for taking job-related courses?	
a) Yes	62.8%
b) No	37.3%
If yes, would the lack of a traditional "A,B,C" keep you from compensating an employee?	
a) Yes	34.4%
b) No	50.0%
c) Questionable or unsure	18.7%
5. Would you use in the hiring process a student evaluation which would list the student's competencies at the end of his program?	
a) Yes	66.7%
b) No	17.7%
c) Maybe	15.6%

THE "M" AND COLLEGE ADMISSIONS OFFICE

RESEARCH MONOGRAPH VIII-B

Office of Planning and Development
March, 1977

This second monograph in the series on the "M" as a letter grade deals with its reception by other institutions of higher education to which our students look to transfer. A list of twenty schools was obtained by identifying all schools to which three or more students sent transcripts. Seventeen questionnaires were returned which gives a response rate of 90%.

A copy of the questionnaire can be seen in Table I and the percent of each response can be found in Table II.

Basically, the data indicates our students receive credits for courses taken at SOCJC (94.1%) but the courses do not go into making up a GPA. Most schools accept the "M" in all courses, but they appear to feel more comfortable about accepting them in courses other than the student's major.

When asked if our grading system created problems for admissions offices, half said, "Yes," and the problems listed all dealt with the fact that the student could not be identified as a "C" student for purposes of admission, scholarships, or required courses. When we asked if the grading system creates problems for our students trying to transfer, about one-third said it does. These problems were basically two, that our good students are being penalized and, secondly, that no GPA can be calculated.

Generally, other institutions would rather that we go to a system similar to theirs which would allow them to compare students, but they are functioning quite well with our system as it is. It appears that our students are not being denied entrance to other schools and the "M" is being transferred as a neutral grade.

TABLE I

QUESTIONNAIRE OF ADMISSIONS OFFICES

Grading Policy at South Oklahoma City Junior College:

A student masters a course by doing a specified (by objectives) amount of work to a pre-determined standard. When this is accomplished, he receives an "M" indicating mastery (no A,B,etc.). If the course is not mastered, nothing appears on the official record.

I. Do you give the student credit for the courses that have been taken at South Oklahoma City Junior College?

Yes _____ No _____

If yes, what type of credit do you give?

_____ Accept the course as having been taken but not adding it into the GPA.

_____ Accept the course as having been taken and the grade is listed as a "C".

_____ Other, please explain: _____

_____

_____

II. Are there courses in which you would be more likely to accept an "M" grade?

Yes _____ No _____

If yes, what types of courses?

_____ Basic introductory courses.

_____ Courses in student's major area.

_____ Courses in areas other than the student's major.

_____ Other, please specify: _____

_____

_____

III. Does our grading system create special problems for you?

Yes _____ No _____

If yes, what types of problems: _____

_____

_____

IV. Does our grading system create special problems for our students trying to transfer to your school?

Yes _____ No _____

If yes, what are some examples of these problems? _____

_____

_____

TABLE II

RESPONSES TO ADMISSIONS OFFICES QUESTIONNAIRE

Question		Percent Responding
I. A.	Do you give the student credit for the courses that have been taken at South Oklahoma City Junior College?	
	1. Yes	94.1%
	2. No	5.9%
B.	What type of credit do you give?	
	1. Accept the course as having been taken but not adding to the GPA	82.4%
	2. Accept the course as having been taken and the grade is listed as a "C"	5.9%
	3. Other	11.8%
II. A.	Are there courses in which you would be more likely to accept an "M" grade?	
	1. Yes	11.8%
	2. No	88.3%
B.	What type of courses?	
	1. Basic introductory courses	5.9%
	2. Courses in student's major	0%
	3. Courses in areas other than student's major	5.9%
III.	Does our grading system create special problems for you?	
	1. Yes	52.9%
	2. No	47.1%
IV.	Does our grading system create special problems for our students?	
	1. Yes	35.3%
	2. No	64.7%

THE "M" AND FINANCIAL AIDS

RESEARCH MONOGRAPH VIII-C

Office of Planning and Development
March, 1977

This research monograph, the third in the series, deals with the area of financial aids. Two basic areas are covered, first, the feelings of financial aid offices at schools to which our students send transcripts and, second, the effect our system has on SOCJC's ability to get money to offer financial aid to our students.

The sample of financial aids offices to which questionnaires were sent was determined in a way similar to the sample of admissions offices, that is all schools to which three or more transcripts were sent made up the sample. Of the twenty questionnaires sent, fourteen were returned, giving a 65% response rate. Table I is a copy of the questionnaire, and Table II contains the responses to the questionnaire.

It appears that of those responding, half feel the chances of our students to get financial aids is good or excellent and half feel it is not possible or poor. In looking at the reasons they have given for their ratings of our students' chances of receiving financial aids, the following appear to be the general feelings: (1) Any student who is admitted has a right to financial aids; (2) Financial aids can be given to anyone making successful academic progress; and (3) Aid based on need is not a problem, but scholarships cannot be awarded without a GPA.

In terms of our receiving money to give financial aids at SOCJC, two groups were questioned, first, the financial aids officer at SOCJC and, second, funding agencies identified by the veterans and financial aids offices at SOCJC.

In a personal interview with our financial aids officer, the following information was obtained.

Some problems in getting funding did exist, particularly at the outset, but these were taken care of (in most cases) through either a written or a

verbal communication with the funding agency. Those funding agencies who were asking for a GPA were in most cases content to have an indication that the student was making "normal" academic progress. The determination of "normal" academic progress was left up to our financial aids office. Comments do continue to the present on why we cannot just have a letter grade like other schools.

One problem area identified in the interview was for our transfer students who apply for scholarships and aid at other schools. A number of scholarships require a GPA when they are applied for, and our students do not have this. It has been handled within this area of the state by a phone call, but it is uncertain what students who transfer out of state or out of this area do.

In identifying if added restrictions are put on funds, the information acquired through the interview indicated that the only extra work added was in the initial process of trying to explain to people the grading policy here so that they could deal with it.

In general, SOCJC's financial aids office indicated that we lose no funds, the students are not hurt, the reporting process is not added to, and most funding agencies have accepted our procedure. (In some cases, they still do verbally complain about the lack of letter grades.)

Data was collected through a questionnaire from four of five funding agencies which had been identified by both the financial aids office and the veterans office. Their comments, included in Table III, appear to indicate they are dealing with our grading system but would much rather we had the traditional system of grading.

In summary, it appears our students may be having trouble getting

scholarships and other financial aids which are based on past academic performance. In looking at our ability to get funds for financial aids, there appears to be no problem.

TABLE I

QUESTIONNAIRE TO FINANCIAL AIDS OFFICES AT TRANSFER INSTITUTIONS

Grading Policy at South Oklahoma City Junior College:

A student masters a course by doing a pre-determined amount of work; when this is accomplished, he receives an "M" (no A,B, etc.). If the course is not mastered, nothing appears on the official record.

1. Rate the chances a student, transferring to your institution with this type of a transcript, would have in getting financial aids.

   _____ Excellent

   _____ Good

   _____ Fair

   _____ Poor

   _____ Not Possible

2. What is the reason for your response to Question 1 ?

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____.

TABLE II

RESPONSES TO FINANCIAL AIDS OFFICES QUESTIONNAIRE

Question	Percent Responding
1. Rate the chances of our students getting financial aids after transferring to your school.	
a. Excellent	21.4%
b. Good	14.3%
c. Fair	0%
d. Poor	14.3%
e. Impossible	21.4%
f. No response	28.5%

2. What is your reason for your response to Question 1?

NO RESPONSE

a. We do not feel that it is a function of the financial aids office to discriminate on the basis of grades in the awarding of aid. If a student is permitted to enroll, he is eligible to apply for aid on a need basis.

b. Any grading system which meets the Regents policies for admission to this institution is recognized by this office. Thus, any student admitted is eligible for funding subject to the availability of funds when the financial aid application is received.

c. Based on satisfactory completion of course work - satisfactory academic progress.

d. BEOG, NDSL, SEOG, and CWS aid is awarded on the basis of financial need; grades are not considered. If the student is admitted to the University by our admissions office, he has established financial need, and we have the money, he will receive aid. The Guaranteed Student Loan Program does have a minimum GPA required. (Check with State Regents.) Scholarships at OSU are awarded on the basis of grades and financial need. I believe a student presenting a transcript, such as you are suggesting, would be at a disadvantage when reviewed by the Institution Scholarship Committee when competing for scholarship awards.

EXCELLENT

a. The financial aid office does not give financial assistance to students with the emphasis on grades, but on financial need.

b. No comment made.

c. Students screened by Admissions Committee. If accepted and financial analysis reflects eligibility, their requests are funded according to funds on hand.

GOOD

a. Any student admitted to BNC is eligible to apply for any financial aids we have.

b. The student is passing and in good standing.

POOR

a. A student could not qualify for an academic scholarship under this system as we give scholarships on the basis of the cumulative GPA. He could receive other types of aid if he is accepted for enrollment, and not accepted on academic probation until he has proven himself at ORU.

b. When I indicate poor I have in mind financial aid such as scholarships which depend on academic performance. Some kinds of aid such as BEOG of course would not depend on such factors. But we find it difficult to establish academic success with a grading system of one type of grade only and would be forced to go back to the high school transcript to see what kind of a student we are dealing with.

NOT POSSIBLE

a. No basis for a decision. The Student Financial Aid Office at Baylor invests only in those needy applicants who have proved their academic ability through certain specified grades and class ranks, as well as test scores.

b. We would be unable to compare this student against other scholarship applicants. However, he would be considered for federal need-based financial aid programs.

TABLE III

FUNDING AGENCIES COMMENTS

1. Presently a bill is pending which is going to make the federal requirements more stringent perhaps coming close to requiring a GPA.

2. Would much rather have a GPA.

3. The system does not prohibit nor does it enhance funding from this agency. We receive negative responses from students regarding this policy.

4. Due to our regulations we have to view the "TW" as signifying failure since we can only pay for a course one time. The student must pay for a repeat of the course and faces possible probation if he incurs too many hours of "TW" in one entry point. The 4 point grading system is more compatible with our system and is more easily interpreted by the V.R. counselors that send their clients to SOCJC.

THE "M" AND HIGH SCHOOL COUNSELORS

RESEARCH MONOGRAPH VIII-D

Office of Planning and Development
March, 1977

This research monograph, the fourth in the series, deals with area high school counselors' perceptions of the "M." A list of 96 counselors was obtained from the admissions office at SOCC, containing the names of all high school and vocational-technical school counselors in the area. Of the 96 questionnaires sent out, 60 were returned, giving a 63% response rate. The questionnaire is presented in Table I, and Table II contains the responses made to each of the questions.

In general, it appears that a little less than two-thirds of the counselors responding are aware of our grading policy. When asked to rate the system we use, half the respondents felt the system was either good or excellent and the other half felt that the system was fair or poor, with a few saying they needed more information. The written comments basically indicated that they felt transferring, motivation, and knowledge of the system were the biggest problems we faced.

When asked what they say about the "M" grade in the process of advising students, mainly there were four different points of advice given: (1) that other schools' acceptance of the "M" is questionable; (2) information is given but no opinion pro or con; (3) that the system is too vague; and (4) that the system is good for poorer and terminal students. Of the 23 counselors who made general comments, about half were positive and half were negative about the system.

In general, there appears to be a need for added information and explanation about the system for the high school counselors. The accomplishment of this would eliminate many of the perceived problems.

TABLE I

QUESTIONNAIRE TO HIGH SCHOOL COUNSELORS

South Oklahoma City Junior College uses the "M" grading system. For each course in which a student attains "Mastery" he is given an "M". For the courses in which a student fails to attain "Mastery", no grade is given. Only those areas in which he attains an "M" are shown on his transcript.

A committee is looking at the use of "M" as a letter grade and we would appreciate knowing your feelings about its use.

1. Were you aware of the system of grading used at South Oklahoma City Junior College before you got this questionnaire?

   Yes _____ No _____

2. If asked to rate the South Oklahoma City Junior College's grading system, what would your response be?

   _____ Excellent

   _____ Good

   _____ Fair

   _____ Poor

   COMMENTS: _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

3. When advising students who ask about South Oklahoma City Junior College, what would you say about the use of "M" grade?

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____.

4. Comments: _____

   _____

   _____.

TABLE II

RESPONSES OF HIGH SCHOOL COUNSELORS TO QUESTIONNAIRE

Question	Percent Responding
1. Were you aware of the grading system?	
Yes	61.7%
No	38.3%
2. How would you rate the grading system?	
Excellent	16.7%
Good	35.0%
Fair	28.3%
Poor	13.3%

COMMENTS:

(1) I like the idea. However, until all schools decide to use a similar system, grades will still be important.

(2) I would like to know what the criteria for a "M" grade is before I could evaluate this grading system.

(3) I would make it hard to transfer grades to another college or university.

(4) I need to know the reaction of the students.

(5) If the student should transfer to a four-year college, I'm afraid it would create some problems as to GPA, etc.

(6) The only problem that I see is what happens when a student transfers to another school. Do you have to change your grades to the A,B,C,D,F scale? I would like to know this when I talk to my students here.

(7) Working with all the other colleges and universities in this area, my thinking has been influenced by them. Most people from colleges don't like that part of your program.

(8) It is not consistent with the grading system of other institutions of higher learning. How could honor students be recognized if everyone receives an "M"?

(9) The "mastery" grade supports the junior college philosophy, and it is my opinion that it implements the student's ability to relieve the pressure of grades and concentrate on achieving his goal of learning.

(10) The grading system concept is sound. I feel that the problem then rests with the providing at which mastery level is achieved.

(11) I believe the A,B,C method gives more incentive for study.

(12) How would this affect college transfer--a detailed explanation would need to be sent with transcripts to employers, etc.

(13) Is it any problem for entrance into any other school or a disadvantage to them to not have grades.

(14) I feel there should be levels of mastery.

(15) For students who are self-motivating, this is great! But for students who are traditionally oriented (A,B,C), it may deter efforts.

(16) I welcome the change and trust that we can get away from the "grade" concept eventually.

(17) I feel it does little to stimulate motivation. If students are to be encouraged to grow, they need to receive a more rewarding indication of their efforts. To me "M" is more appropriate for mediocrity than mastery.

(18) I did not know about your grading system until I attended In-Service, as Voc. Tech. Sept. 17.

(19) I feel system is good but have had a difficult time being accepted by other colleges and universities using letter grades.

(20) I feel that this grading system really represents what a student can do. It is good that he can try and try again.

(21) I feel this system would encourage those students who are apprehensive about undertaking college courses.

(22) Grading system similar to the other colleges and universities throughout the state.

(23) It does not let a person know where they stand as compared to others or it does not let a receiving institution know where they stand as compared to others or it does not let a receiving institution know how capable a person is.

(24) Letter grades show achievement; a student will work harder to achieve a letter grade of "A" than he would to receive an "M"; an "M" might represent a "C" grade.

(25) For the terminal student such a grading system may be adequate; but what about the student who desires to transfer?

(26) It all depends upon what the student wants or what his plans are for the future.

(27) I think it would be more important to know the receiving school attitude should he transfer.

(28) Are the students fully aware of this program. One of my 1976 spring graduates went to summer school, he failed the English course and was somewhat remorseful about failing.

(29) Keep down the competitive pressure of grades.

(30) Until all colleges use this system, I do not feel it is justified even though I agree with the philosophy of "no" letter grades.

(31) There is a need for some sort of system of college credit for those people who are not interested in a diploma. Also this kind of system might encourage a borderline student to continue instead of dropping out.

(32) Too vague.

(33) On classes taken by students not pursuing an academic goal, this is fine. However, I feel that higher education has been far too lax in its grading the past few years and that those classes to be transferred to other institutions for further student educ. should show an actual grade based on specific criterion.

(34) I sometimes feel that there is too much emphasis on grades rather than learning.

(35) The theory is excellent and should be applied to all schools. If a student elects to transfer to a four-year institution, can all of the applicable "M" credits be applied to a four-year degree?

(36) It may cause confusion to those who transfer and want to enter "honors" classes or who need a GPA for certain considerations.

(37) Better academic understanding could be realized by the student by following concepts of his high schools grading system.

(38) The "M" system encourages all students to be successful.

(39) The idea is fine, but too much is left to the imagination of people working with the grading system later. Mastery for one instructor may not be the same for another.

(40) This grading system will focus on the success of the student which I think is great. Most recognize their weakness and I feel the psychological effect is very encouraging.

(41) Does not reflect, in any manner, the academic abilities of a student. What effort was involved in obtaining an "M". Did or does a student hav to repeat the course or portions of courses many times.

(42) Students that we have had who went from S. Okla. City JC did well in college when they went to other schools. I believe the standards set before a student could receive a "M" in a class insure high standards in material retention and learning.

(43) The idea of a Pass/Fail criterion for a course is good, but primarily for acceptance for transfer purposes. I rate it only fair because since it is not used more universally, it is near to impossible to give comparative placement, ranking, scholarship eligibility.

(44) Most students like to know what they earned in terms of a traditional grading system. Having worked with transcripts from many areas of the U.S. and abroad, we find it very frustrating to interpret other people's innovative systems. I could see how this could work to disadvantage if a student transferred to another college. It is also very difficult for students working toward honors, Phi Beta Kappa, etc.! (re: class standing, GPA etc.)

3. In advising students, what would you say about the "M" grade?

(1) That they would get credit for a course with an "M" grade, but the level of proficiency would be more on their own judgment and that they might have to prove same when entering another system.

(2) I would explain that an "M" grade meant the student had attained a high level of achievement in the subject area. Further, I would explain that in figuring a grade point and in transferring this mark to other schools, the student should have no problems.

(3) The M grade does not measure how a student compares with others taking the same course. With the use of M a student competes only against himself.

(4) I'm afraid I would have to be honest and say I am lukewarm. I'm all for innovative programs; however, there are too many hurdles to overcome in grading systems which vary too much. <u>I'm very enthusiastic</u> about SOCJC and its other programs, however.

(5) That it is unique to the college--the only problem I would have would be explaining how an "M" would transfer to a four-year institution.

(6) Basically what is in the 1st paragraph--For some students this is an incentive to try their best.

(7) I think it is one of the most fair ways to grade.

(8) That I thought it was poor because an M did not have a stated criterior. I feel the grading system should be more in keeping with other systems in our area. If I were an employer, I would certainly want to know how well a student did as well as how poorly.

(9) I would make them aware of it and its possible advantages and disadvantages.

(10) That the student will have to master each subject before he can graduate.

(11) I have had students talking about your grading system. Most seem concerned about the "M" system. I think you have students going to Oscar Rose because of your grading system.

(12) This is their method of grading. You must realize it is different than the A,B,C,D,&F you are accustomed to in high school.

(13) Explanation necessary but usually received very positively.

(14) That as students attain mastery they may move to the next level of aspiration.

(15) Grading system good for self-directed and motivated students.

(16) Problem in transferring?

(17) It is more meaningful than a letter grade as it shows mastery of a skill rather than an evaluation of academic worth.

(18) I tell them about it and let them form their own opinion. I neither praise nor criticize it.

(19) I am in favor of the "M" grading system. I think we put too much emphasis on grades.

(20) One could only "pass" and not "fail" because failures would not appear on the transcript. This could be an ego booster or even allow a person to get a job which he might not otherwise.

(21) It should reduce the pressure of grades and that it could be compared to the pass-fail system used in college.

(22) I do not give an opinion just information.

(23) It does not classify you as far as being an excellent, fair, or poor student, so may tend to be a break for you during your initial work.

(24) Must be a genuine interest in learning and not for the sake of grades. Will have an adjustment to make regarding grades as an incentive for learning.

(25) The "M" grade is a system of evaluating a student's performance.

(26) A different kind of grading plan is used there; the student receives credit when he or she has mastered the course. No failing grades are given.

(27) It gives a student a chance to move at his/her own rate of learning.

(28) I would tell them what you told us.

(29) Feel system is adequate but all surrounding area do not accept, and sometimes present problem when transferring credits to another college. Feel adjustments are being made in that direction.

(30) I would tell students, especially those who feel their grades are not good enough for some colleges and to those who has complexes about grades, that they might adjust very well to SOCJC grading system.

(31) I would say your grade "M" would be given when you master the course you are taking. Then I would explain further if need to.

(32) That he would have to adjust his thinking and that he will be competing only with learning and not with other students.

(33) I would make it a point to explain the grading system.

(34) Nothing unless asked.

(35) I would say nothing at all about the grading system.

(36) This is a definite benefit for any of our handicapped students who might require extra time to complete a course. It is a benefit in that it allows all to progress at their own rate.

(37) It means mastery--not equivalent to a grade but shows that credit can be received for mastery.

(38) Unsatisfactory work does not mar your record.

(39) The system seems to be encouraging. Students will not complete with each other for letter grades. The absence of grade pressure should enhance learning.

(40) I would tell them exactly what was stated above.

(41) They should be advised of it. If they option the other way, they would need to make other plans.

(42) They would need to have in mind the purpose for attending SOCJC and what future plans they have in mind for the use of their post H.S. education.

(43) I advise them of the grading system; likewise I tell them they will not have a letter grade when transferring. Also that if their grades were high enough they could not graduate with honors.

(44) I would say that it might be to their advantage especially if they are working full-time. I would tell them about the grading system and let them decide for themselves.

(45) I need to know more about: purpose, how it transfers, etc.

(46) I asked my students. They didn't like it.

(47) Evaluate the system carefully. Just as I would caution the use of "Pass - Fail" option in college courses or the "S - U" system.

(48) OK

(49) I would explain it to them and tell them that it is accepted at OU if they plan to continue school.

(50) If you are taking a 2 yr. program, SOCJC is the school with the least grade pressure - consider it seriously. If you know you plan to transfer to a 4 yr school, check transfer options before you spend time and money.

(51) Repeat the above.

(52) If terminal students - no problem.
If transfer students - very poor approach.

(53) Each person is allowed time to master a course while working at his own speed. This allows for unforeseen happenings that often interupt ones schooling.

(54) My greatest would be in the student transferring grades to another institution.

(55) I would explain the grading system to the students and emphasize their failures would not show on their transcript; only their successfully passing a course would be recorded.

4. GENERAL COMMENTS:

(1) South Oklahoma City Junior College is doing a fine job in relation to educating, on a junior college level, our students. The people with whom I have worked from South Oklahoma City Junior College are delightful and very helpful. They truly try to help our students and the students don't feel as if they are a part of a "mass production" effort. Bob Klaassen and Liz Lucker have been especially helpful to us here at Blanchard High School.

(2) In a strictly skill course it is difficult to determine what "Mastery" means and I believe it would cover too wide a range. In a typing course, for example, passing might require 40 words minimum. Suppose a student attains the level of 60 words. How does the "M" reflect this superior ability?

(3) I believe a more thorough study of the success or non-success of the grading system should be done.

(4) We have many students and parents expressing concern over the "M" system and choose Oscar Rose instead.

(5) The only conflict I perceive is in the use of a J.C. course as a stepping stone to a state U. where they are locked into a grade and 9 wk/semester time structure. The student doesn't receive a realistic view of the pressure he'll have at the university. If he completes two years with you the situation is excellent.

(6) Please send information on the ability to transfer. (Done)

(7) I feel it is a great blessing to many students. Our society is so grade oriented.

(8) SOCJC is a great college and I feel is an asset to the students and community. Keep up the good work.

(9) It seems a good break for the student who is having problems getting started, but the student in a 2 year completion course would get no benefit from being an outstanding student.

(10) When this system is thoroughly explained and understood I see no reason why this grading system would not be accepted.

(11) I personally think that it is an excellent way to grade. Would appear to deter cheaters and encourage honesty.

(12) Thanks for the opportunity to respond.

(13) "M" is a good grade for those students who want to "just get by" and satisfy minimum requirements.

(14) Feel maybe you need two grading systems. The "letter" grade for students who plan to transfer to a four year college and "M" for those students who are not going any farther.

(15) Sounds worth of further and expanded use in other grade levels. Also has its shortcomings as to relative strengths of student.

(16) You are to be commended for instituting this remarkable system.

(17) I feel you could possibly provide both options for the student. He could choose depending on future plans after leaving SOCJC.

(18) Competition is an important if not critical part of motivation for educational achievement. Is the average H.S. grade going to function on all cylinders when the person next to him is not producing nearly as well but receiving the same mark? I feel he will not thus lowering academic excellence.

(19) The pendulum is swinging back to basics and traditional. Away from all this innovative education. The rise again of our ACT and SAT scores I hope!

(20) Public school systems grading procedures are an entirely different story.

(21) No way to compute GPA to recommend a student for further scholarships.

(22) I'm very impressed with your programs, feel strongly that the community needs your system.

(23) I think it should compare with the rest of the colleges.

THE "M" AND OUR STUDENTS

RESEARCH MONOGRAPH VIII-E

Office of Planning and Development
March, 1977

This research monograph deals with the perceptions of the "M" that students attending classes in the fall 1976 had. A sample of all the 4,414 students attending was chosen by randomly selecting 10% of the day classes and 10% of the night classes. This sampling strategy gave a total sample size of 304 students (130 from day classes and 174 from night classes). Table I is a copy of the questionnaire distributed to the students, and Table II contains the percent of day and night, as well as the total, responding to each of the alternatives.

In general, the responses are not too different between day and night class students. Forty to forty-five percent see the "M" grade as an advantage, while twenty-five to thirty percent see it as a disadvantage, and the rest feel it is neither. When asked about changing the system, half of the students attending night classes said they would leave it the same, while over 58% of the students in day classes said they would not change it. The comment most often made by night class students was to allow for an option ("M" or "A,B,C"), while the comment most often made by the day students was the use of "A,B,C" and no grade should be substituted for the "M." The most cited advantages were: (1) Students are working to learn not for a letter grade; (2) System won't hurt your transcript; (3) Less competition, pressure, and threat; and (4) Ability to make up tests. In terms of the disadvantages, the top responses were: (1) Hard when transferring or job-hunting; and (2) There is no reward for excellence and/or effort. Comments about what other students have told them appear to be about 50% for and 50% against the use of "M."

TABLE I

QUESTIONNAIRE TO STUDENTS ATTENDING SOUTH OKLAHOMA CITY JUNIOR COLLEGE

A committee is looking at the use of "M" as a letter grade and we appreciate knowing your feelings about its use.

1. To me the "M" grade is:

_____a. An advantage

_____b. A disadvantage

_____c. Neither an advantage nor a disadvantage

2. If you could change the grading system at South Oklahoma City Junior College:

_____a. Would you leave it the same?

_____b. Would you change it to the traditional "ABCD&F" grading system?

_____c. Other: _____

_____

_____.

3. The major advantage, as you see it, of the "M" grade is: _____

_____

_____.

4. The major disadvantage, as you see it, of the "M" grade is: _____

_____

_____

_____.

5. Other students have indicated to me the following about the use of "M":

_____

_____

_____

_____.

TABLE II

RESPONSES TO STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE

Question	Percent Responding Day	Night	Total
1. The "M" grade is:			
a. An advantage.	47.7%	41.4%	43.8%
b. A disadvantage.	26.9%	29.3%	28.3%
c. Neither an advantage or disadvantage.	25.4%	29.9%	28.0%
2. If you could change the grading system, what would you do?			
a. Leave it the same.	58.6%	49.1%	52.6%
b. Change it to the traditional A,B,C, etc.	32.0%	41.6%	37.2%
c. Other.	9.4%	9.2%	9.3%
3. The advantages of the system are:			
1) Nobody is put down or classified (slower students), everyone can master.	12.1%		
2) Take over and won't hurt transcript.	13.1%		
3) Have to make 80%, therefore be a good student and not average.	11.1%		
4) Less competition and threat and pressure.	15.2%		
5) For job reference.	1.0%		
6) Work to learn not for grade (and know what must be done).	14.1%		
7) Each person in a range receives the same grade.	2.0%		
8) Non-punitive.	2.0%		
9) Not as nerve wracking.	3.0%		
10) Pass/fail.	1.0%		
11) Chance to make up exam.	8.1%		

Question		Percent Responding Day	Night	Total
3. (Continued)				
12)	Can scrape by on subjects not good in.	1.0%		
13)	Learn at own pace.	2.0%		
14)	Percentages or letter grade not shown.	2.0%		
15)	Once mastered you don't have to retake it.	1.0%		
16)	None.	3.0%		
17)	Not much studying - tests are easy.	1.0%		
18)	Stops comparisons.	1.0%		
19)	Easier to learn.	1.0%		
20)	Leaving the learning up to the student.	1.0%		
21)	Extra time to learn.	2.0%		
22)	More room to catch up.	1.0%		
1)	Learning not letter grade.		19.8%	
2)	You don't have to study hard to make 80%.		4.2%	
3)	Helps lower than average person look good.		4.2%	
4)	Transcript doesn't look bad.		10.4%	
5)	Easier to get by.		1.0%	
6)	Can make up tests.		12.5%	
7)	You either master or not.		2.1%	
8)	None.		3.1%	
9)	Not ranked.		1.0%	
10)	Working at your own speed.		2.1%	
11)	Having to make 80% (working hard for "M").		6.3%	
12)	Non-punitive.		2.1%	

Question	Percent Responding Day	Night	Total
3. (Continued)			
13) Gives all a chance and it is your fault if you don't get material.		6.3%	
14) Less tension to make letter grades and pressure.		3.1%	
15) Better chance to pass.		1.0%	
16) Flexibility.		1.0%	
17) Doesn't promote cheating.		1.0%	
18) Good for older people.		1.0%	
19) More equitable.		2.1%	
20) Psychological advantage.		1.0%	
21) More determined and more effort.		3.1%	
22) Less competition.		5.2%	
23) No difference if 100% or 80%.		1.0%	
24) Must learn a set amount and 80% makes you feel you have mastered the material.		3.1%	
25) Realistic goals.		1.0%	
26) Higher grades imply higher intellect.		1.0%	
4. The major disadvantages of the system are:			
1) None.	11.1%		
2) Hard to transfer.	26.9%		
3) Doesn't add to GPA because is non.	2.8%		
4) If you have completed more than 1/2 your course then you get nothing.	.9%		
5) Don't know where you stand.	11.1%		

Question		Percent Responding Day	Night	Total
4. (Continued)				
6)	No reward for excellence; therefore, no motivation	25.0%		
7)	No chance if you are below 80%.	5.6%		
8)	People who think an "M" is going to be super easy bother the class.	.9%		
9)	Only have to pass module to pass.	1.9%		
10)	Did 80%; therefore should get 80%.	.9%		
11)	Need a B to pass only need a C other places.	.9%		
12)	Too easy.	.9%		
13)	Don't work up to potential.	1.9%		
14)	M harder than it looks.	1.9%		
15)	Nursing average some grades and not others.	.9%		
16)	People don't understand.	.9%		
17)	Not getting credit when it is due.	.9%		
18)	No competition, no incentive.	2.8%		
19)	Leaves harder classes Jr. and Sr. to determine GPA.	.9%		
20)	M in some classes is 90%; that's too high.	.9%		
1)	None.		9.0%	
2)	Easy to get "M", people don't try hard.		7.2%	
3)	Having to take tests over.		.9%	
4)	Taking one test at a time.		.9%	
5)	4 yr. schools 80% may not be good enough.		.9%	

Question	Percent Responding Day	Night	Total
4. (Continued)			
6) Transferability to schools and jobs, no GPA.		24.3%	
7) No reward for excellence and effort.		21.6%	
8) 80% is higher than most schools for a pass.		.9%	
9) Pass or fail no middle ground.		3.6%	
10) Its acceptance, it is not understood.		1.8%	
11) Not knowing exact grade.		12.6%	
12) High passing rate, you can't just get by.		3.6%	
13) Cheating.		.9%	
14) Too broad to be an accurate measure.		.9%	
15) Allows individual teachers to set curves to fit class without giving true representation of points made on test.		.9%	
16) Final test pressure to get M and 80% or flunk.		.9%	
17) Lack of competition.		1.8%	
18) No reinforcement.		.9%	
19) If they are doing 80% why not show it.		.9%	
20) Problem in reimbursing.		.9%	
21) 80% average?		.9%	
22) Getting no credit.		.9%	
23) Waiting a week for test results.		.9%	
24) Instructors don't have to worry about getting material across.		.9%	
25) Having to take class over.		.9%	

Question	Percent Responding Day	Night	Total
5. Other students have indicated the following about "M":			
1) "A" students don't like it that they get the same as "C" students.	2.1%		
2) Most like it.	8.3%		
3) Doesn't make any difference.	2.1%		
4) Don't like it.	14.6%		
5) Want a number system.	2.1%		
6) OK.	2.1%		
7) None.	4.2%		
8) Like it better than grades.	20.8%		
9) Those who want to get by like it, serious students don't like it.	6.3%		
10) Insane.	4.2%		
11) Good.	2.1%		
12) Dislike it and think it is unfair.	2.1%		
13) Meaningless when transferring.	12.5%		
14) Lack of understanding.	4.2%		
15) 1/2 and 1/2.	10.4%		
16) Not learning material.	2.1%		
1) Like it.		38.4%	
2) Don't like it.		17.8%	
3) Worry about transferring.		9.6%	
4) Effectiveness.		1.4%	
5) 1/2 and 1/2.		9.6%	

Question	Percent Responding Day	Night	Total
6) Hard to make "M" (80% of everything).		5.5%	
7) Can't tell how well you have done.		2.7%	
8) "C" students just can't make it.		1.4%	
9) Not much.		2.7%	
10) Don't understand it.		2.7%	
11) Don't know.		2.7%	
12) Satisfied.		1.4%	
13) It'll make you or break you.		1.4%	
14) "M" is meaningless and anyone can pass.		2.7%	

THE "M" AND THE FACULTY AND STAFF

RESEARCH MONOGRAPH VIII-F

Office of Planning and Development
April, 1977

This monograph is the final one in the series dealing with the "M." The information in this paper was obtained from a questionnaire given to all faculty and staff at SOCJC during the fall 1976 semester. A copy of the questionnaire is presented in Table I, while Table II contains responses made by each of the three faculty-staff divisions (classified, professional-instructional, and professional-non-instructional). The response rate for each of the three groups is as follows:

1. Classified returned 30 out of 88 (34.1%).
2. Professional-non-instructional returned 32 out of 45 (71.1%).
3. Professional-instructional returned 77 out of 143 (53.8%).

It appears for all three categories that the greatest percent of people see "M" as an advantage for students. About a quarter of each group did feel that the "M" was a disadvantage. The other quarter in all three groups felt it was neither or both an advantage or disadvantage. When asked about changing the "M," about half the classified group felt it should not be changed, while only about one-third of the other two groups felt it should stay the same. Changing to the traditional grading system was suggested by about a quarter of the classified but only by about 10% of the other two groups. One-half of both the professional groups felt there should be a change other than going to the traditional system. The two suggestions occurring most often were the use of an optional system (choice of "M" or "A,B,C,etc.") or an "A,B,C" no credit system. About one-third of the classified group indicated other types of grading systems than a traditional system, the suggestion most often given being to allow the student an option.

The major advantages listed by all three groups are that the system is non-punitive and that there is less pressure for grades put on the student. The major disadvantages listed are again similar between groups, with transferability being the number one concern by all three groups and the fact that there is no reward for the excellent student running a close second.

In response to the last question, both the instructors and the classified groups feel that about one-half the students see it as an advantage and half see it as a disadvantage. The professional-non-instructional group, on the other hand, felt that about two-thirds of the students saw the "M" as a disadvantage and only one-third saw it as an advantage.

It appears that the majority of people feel the system is an advantage to students but that problems in transferring and the fact that there is no reward for excellence are definite disadvantages with the present system.

TABLE I

QUESTIONNAIRE TO FACULTY & STAFF

A committee is looking at the use of "M" as a letter grade and we would appreciate knowing your feelings about its use. Please indicate which category you are in:

_____ Professional - Teaching

_____ Professional - Non-teaching

_____ Classified

1. Do you see the "M" as:

_____a. An advantage for students at South Oklahoma City Junior College.

_____b. A disadvantage for students at South Oklahoma City Junior College.

_____c. Neither an advantage nor a disadvantage for students at South Oklahoma City Junior College.

2. If you could change the present grading system:

_____a. Would you leave it the same?

_____b. Would you change it to the traditional "A,B,C,D,&F" grading system?

Other: _____

_____.

3. The major advantage, as you see it, of the "M" grade is: _____

_____

_____

_____.

4. The major disadvantage, as you see it, of the "M" grade is: _____

_____

_____

5. Students have indicated to me the following about the use of "M": ____

_____

_____.

TABLE II

RESPONSES OF THE FACULTY AND STAFF TO THE QUESTIONNAIRE

Question	PERCENT RESPONDING		
	CLASSIFIED - 30	PROFESSIONAL NON-INSTRUCTIONAL - 32	PROFESSIONAL INSTRUCTIONAL - 77
1. Do you see the "M" as:			
a. An advantage for students	56.7%	43.8%	41.6%
b. A disadvantage for students	20.0%	25.0%	24.7%
c. Neither an advantage or disadvantage	6.7%	12.5%	13.0%
d. Both an advantage and disadvantage (Added by a number of people)	13.3%	18.8%	20.8%
2. If you could change the present grading system:			
a. Would leave it the same	46.7%	31.3%	36.4%
b. Change to traditional grading system	23.3%	9.4%	14.3%
c. Other	30.0%	56.3%	48.1%

3. The major advantage of the "M" as you see it is:

	Percent Responding
CLASSIFIED	
1. Non-punitive	10.0%
2. Less pressure if afraid of failing	36.7%
3. Not compare students (no competition)	16.7%
4. Not hurt transcript	10.0%
5. Few only want indication of passing	3.3%
6. Working at own pace	10.0%
7. Learning - not a grade	3.3%
8. Don't try hardest	3.3%
NON-INSTRUCTIONAL	
1. Non-punitive	31.3%
2. Easier to grade	3.1%
3. Oriented to competencies (less subjective)	21.9%
4. Student goes at own level and rate	6.3%
5. Less threatening	18.8%
6. None	3.1%
7. Learning - not grades	12.5%
8. Less competitive	15.6%
9. Lets employers know what students can do.	3.1%
10. Success oriented.	6.3%

3. (Continued)

FACULTY	Percent Responding
1. Gives an opportunity for students to succeed who might not otherwise	3.9%
2. Easier to grade tests and totally	5.2%
3. Non-punitive and non-threatening and no failure	26.0%
4. Attracts students who would not otherwise attend	6.5%
5. Allows students and teachers to be less grade conscious and limits competition	43.3%
6. Forces students to reach a high proficiency	2.6%
7. Clarity for student and instructor in terms of what he must learn	2.6%
8. More relaxed atmosphere (less pressure) but do produce exceptional work	11.7%
9. Students have many chances - can return at point dropped out	1.3%
10. No bad grades on transcripts	2.6%
11. Emphasis on learning - not grade	11.7%
12. M is a cop-out, it is ill-defined and requires too much of a student to get credit (80-100)	1.3%
13. Consistent with philosophy	3.9%
14. None	2.6%
15. Less cheating	2.6%
16. Exploration without penalization	3.9%
17. Helps students who are weaker students	2.6%
18. Multiple chances to pass test and get M	1.3%

4. The major disadvantage of the "M" as you see it is:

CLASSIFIED	Percent Responding
1. Transferring	56.7%
2. Employers	6.7%
3. No reward for above average	23.3%
4. Scholarships recipient and financial aids	3.3%
5. Hard to tell where improvement is needed	3.3%
6. None	6.7%
7. Knowledge about it at other schools	3.3%
8. Don't try hardest	3.3%
9. Lack of uniform criteria	3.3%
NON-INSTRUCTIONAL	
1. Transferability	62.5%
2. Non-rewarding (of excellence)	15.6%
3. Financial aid and scholarship receiving	3.1%
4. Too much required for student who only wants to do minimum	3.1%
5. Step toward mediocrity	3.1%
6. Force students to take general education courses which they are not interested in.	3.1%
7. Need competition	3.1%
8. Thought of as pass-fail	3.1%
9. Need more information available on it so people in and out of institution can understand it.	15.6%
10. Employers want comparability	3.1%
FACULTY	
1. Non-rewarding (for excellence)	29.9%
2. Non-motivating (incentives)	6.5%
3. Non-comprehensive	1.3%

4. FACULTY (Continued)	Percent Responding
4. Non-interpretive	1.3%
5. Performance regresses to the mean	2.6%
6. No effort or rate indicator	2.6%
7. None	6.5%
8. Understanding not consistent throughout the institution	2.6%
9. Hard to transfer and scholarships and professional schools	45.5%
10. Lack of understanding about it outside	13.0%
11. No middle ground (< 80%)	2.6%
12. Harder on students (must achieve a high level of proficiency)	3.9%
13. No actual account of how student is doing	1.3%
14. Not a concrete guideline for instructors	1.3%
15. Re-testing students can memorize what is required	1.3%
16. M is a cop-out	1.3%
17. Lack of competitiveness for those who need it	1.3%
18. Number of times student can take test	1.3%
19. Better students suffer	2.6%
20. Students procrastinate and let things go	1.3%

5. Students have indicated the following about the "M":

CLASSIFIED	
1. Some do and some don't like it	10.0%
2. Transferability	23.3%
3. Non-rewarding	3.3%
4. Like it	33.3%
5. Don't like it	3.3%

5. CLASSIFIED (Continued)	Percent Responding
6. Want an A,B,etc.	6.7%
7. Stifles competition	3.3%
8. No failure - like it	3.3%
NON-INSTRUCTIONAL	
1. Like it	12.5%
2. Don't like no reward for excellence	6.3%
3. Need to equate M with GPA	3.1%
4. Encourages people to go to school	6.3%
5. 1/2 like and 1/2 don't	12.5%
6. Worry about transferability	31.3%
7. Good student - no, lazy student - yes	6.3%
8. None	9.4%
9. Indifferent	3.1%
10. Don't understand it	3.1%
11. Have to work too hard	3.1%
FACULTY	
1. Like it	
2. Non-motivating	2.6%
3. Non-rewarding	7.8%
4. Would like to know where they stand	3.9%
5. Want A,B,C so if transfer they don't end up with just "C"	2.6%
6. Don't know	3.9%
7. 1/2 for and 1/2 against	6.5%
8. Worry about transferring	18.2%
9. Bottom 1/3 like it	1.3%

5. FACULTY (Continued)	Percent Responding
10. Some feel everyone passes and there is no need to work hard	1.3%
11. Penalizes good student, rewards laziness and neutralizes the instructor	1.3%
12. Like it but want recognition for average achiever	5.2%
13. Don't like it	6.5%
14. Varied	2.6%
15. Like it when understood	1.3%
16. Think of it as pass-fail not mastery	1.3%
17. Hard to get scholarships	2.6%
18. Don't understand	1.3%
19. Good students don't particularly like it.	1.3%

UNIVERSITY OF CALIF.
LOS ANGELES

FEB 16 1979

CLEARINGHOUSE FOR
JUNIOR COLLEGES